

STATE OF MARYLAND

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Shari T. Wilson, Secretary

BILL NO: SB 271

COMMITTEE: Environmental Matters

POSITION: Support

TITLE: Aquaculture – Shellfish – Leasing

BILL ANALYSIS: This bill allows the Department of Natural Resources to revise the existing leasing program to facilitate more active and ongoing use of leased bottom. It also allows the Department to establish Aquaculture Enterprise Zones, within certain limitations, to streamline the permitting process to encourage aquaculture and to assure that aquaculture occurs in areas of suitable water quality, consistent with federal requirements. It also provides initial priority for persons who hold tidal commercial fishing licenses.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: Support.

Due to disease and other factors the commercial shellfish fishery is at unsustainably low levels, yet this industry should be sustained. Aquaculture provides an opportunity to do so, but the current approach of site-by-site permitting is cumbersome and inefficient, and existing leases are often unproductive. This bill will solve both problems by providing for what are essentially “pre-permitted” Aquaculture Enterprise Zones, where water quality conditions are appropriate, permits are already in place and the Department of Natural Resources can readily assign appropriate lease areas to those who will productively use them. This approach will also facilitate appropriate law enforcement and assure consistency with federal requirements for interstate shipping of shellfish.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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